Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 DLOS-09 OES-06 IO-13 ACDA-07 TRSE-00
EB-08 COME-00 /111 W
----------271238Z 011052 /53
P 271146Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6552
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 2903

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PLOS PBOR LY IT TS FR
SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN DISPUTE: POSSIBLE FRENCH MEDIA-
TION EFFORTS

REF: STATE 93301, STATE 90407, PARIS 10513

1. (SUMMARY) AT HIS REQUEST, FRENCH COUNSELOR THOMAS CALLED ON EMBASSY APRIL 26 TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON TUNISIAN-LIBYAN OFFSHORE DISPUTE. E/C COUNSELOR REITERATED USG POSITIONS REGARDING: OUR ENCOURAGEMENT OF CONTINUING GOT RESTRAINT IN DISPUTED ZONE, OUR EFFORTS TO DISCOURAGE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF U.S. COMPANIES IN ZONE, OUR OPPOSITION TO APPEASEMENT OF LIBYANS, OUR PERCEPTION THAT POTENTIAL THREAT TO PEACE IS REAL, ETC. THOMAS SPOKE OF PRELIMINARY NATURE OF FRENCH MEDIATION EFFORTS AND FRENCH OIL INDUSTRY POSTURE OF AVOIDING INVOLVEMENT IN DISPUTED AREA. EMBOFF EXPRESSED USG SUPPORT FOR ANY MEDIATION EFFORTS PROMISING SUCCESS, RECOMMENDED FRENCH SEEK FROM GOT PRECISION ON TUNISIAN BOUNDARY CLAIMS AND THEIR LEGAL BASIS. (END SUMMARY).

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2. THOMAS, WHO HAD BEEN IN PARIS LAST WEEK, SAID FRENCH HAD SUGGESTED TO GOT THAT FORMER UNDERTAKE MEDIATION EFFORTS. TUNISIAN HAD AGREED, EXPRESSING OPTIMISM THAT THEIR LEGAL CASE WOULD PREVAIL UNDER ANY FAIR FORMULA FOR REACHING SETTLEMENT.

3. THOMAS SAID GOF HAS YET TO APPROACH LIBYANS. IT STILL IS SEEKING FORMULA LIKELY TO GAIN QADHAFI'S ACCEPTANCE. HE SAID

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QUAI BELIEVES QADHAFI NOT LIKELY TO ACCEPT DIRECT FRENCH ROLE
IN MEDIATION/ARBITRATION--AND IMPLIED GOF NOT ENTHUSIASTIC AT
PROSPECT OF SUCH ROLE GIVEN ITS MAJOR ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN
BOTH COUNTRIES. GOF, THOMAS SAID, NOW CONSULTING WITH EXPERTS
AND APPROACHING "THIRD WORLD" REPRESENTATIVES WITH VIEW TO COM-
ING UP WITH AGREEABLE FORMULA.

4. IN RESPECT TO OIL INDUSTRY ACTIVITY ON BEHALF OF TWO PAR-
TIES TO DISPUTE: (A) THOMAS SAID HE BELIEVED ELF-AQUITAINE
LIBYA HAD ENCOUNTERED NO PROBLEMS WITH LIBYAN GOVERNMENT IN POST-
PONING SCHEDULED 1977 DRILLING UNITL NEXT YEAR; (B) THOMAS SAID
GOT DID EXPECT TOTAL GROUP TO START DEVELOPMENT OF ISIS FIELD
THIS SUMMER WITH VIEW TO PRODUCTION IN LATE 1978 OR EARLY 1979
(THOMAS SUGGESTED LIKELIHOOD THIS WORK WOULD PROCEED UNLESS
QADHAFI'S THREATS ABOUT ISIS BECOME MORE CONVINCING; E/C
COUNSELOR NOTED US FIRM PARTNER IN GROUP); (C) THOMAS SAID ELF-
AQUITAINE TUNISIE IS UNDER GOT PRESSURE TO UNDERTAKE MORE EX-
PLORATION WORK THIS YEAR IN SEPEG PERMIT AREA (WHERE SAIPEM
LIBYA IS ACCUSED OF POACHING) BUT FRENCH ARE DETERMINED TO
AVOID INVOLVEMENT IN THIS AREA.

5. THOMAS INQUIRED ABOUT EMBASSY KNOWLEDGE OF PROSPECTIVE
WORK IN AREA BY DRILLING RIG NOW IN ALGECIRAS; E/C COUNSELOR
SAID HE ASSUMED THIS RELATED TO POSSIBLE CONTRACT WITH ETAP
FOR WORK IN ITS PERMIT AREA.

6. EMBOFF AND THOMAS AGREED TO KEEP IN TOUCH ON RELATIED DEVEL-
OPMENTS.

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7. COMMENT: E/C COUNSELOR GOT IMPRESSION THAT SOME FRENCH
OFFICIALS-PREOCCUPIED WITH ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN LIBYA--HAVE
LOTTLE TASTE FOR MEDIATING ROLE BEYOND FORESTALLING UN SECURITY
COUNCIL ACTION AND SEEKING ACCEPTABLE THIRD PARTIES. ALSO HAD
IMPRESSION THOMAS WAS FISHING TO SEE WHAT SORT ADVICE WE ARE
GIVING GOT AND HOW AGGRESSIVE IS OUR COMMERCIAL POSTURE; FOR
INSTANCE, WHETHER US FIRMS WOULD BE LIKELY TO UNDERTAKE WORK
FOR GOT IF IT WISHED TO REPLACE FRENCH IN SEPEG PERMIT AREA.
E/C COUNSELOR SOUGHT TO BE REASSURING WITH RESPECT TO USG POLICY
REGARDING WORK IN DISPUTED AREAS.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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